



Ruminant News

November 2008



Welcome To C.C.F Ruminant News

With Winter upon us and herds running in from the Autumn deluges, we turn our attention again to topical information provided by C.C.F technical staff.

CCF Dairy Conference 2008

Last month we held our inaugural Dairy Conference. The event was well attended by dairy farmers from across our trading area.

We enjoyed three top-rated speakers. Dr David Johnson, from Northern Ireland is a leading plant breeder. He discussed the benefits of the latest grass varieties, and how new varieties coming through were producing record grass yields with lower nitrogen inputs. He cited Tyrella, Dunluce and Foyle as exciting new varieties included in the latest Centenary seed mixtures.

John Twigge, senior ruminant specialist with Frank Wright Trouw, took a detailed look at maximising performance this Winter. His talk included an appraisal of compound feeds and the necessity to "CHECK YOUR CAKE TICKETS" to ensure that ingredient lists remain constant and to avoid suppliers upsetting your cows' rumen. He looked at specialist rumen buffers, as many herds will suffer from acidosis, especially with all this grain to feed. He produced a simple-to-follow guide of practical pointers to performance (our sales team have a copy if you are interested). Finally, Dr John Roberts from the SAC in Scotland had a simple message: "Only worry about what you can influence and not about things you can't." His talk included an insight into his system at Crichton Royal Farm and the Langhill herd, where he runs both a high-input and a high-forage based herd of cows. Performance was impressive, with the high-forage herd producing 8100 litres off one ton of feed, with a margin per litre of 20p.

The aim of the conference was to bring ideas to members to help sustain and improve their systems. The challenge will be to help implement these ideas and, of course, to find another exceptional list of speakers for next year !!

Winter Feeding Tips

Check Cow Condition.

In many situations, cows are in poorer condition than expected after a terrible grazing period this year. This could have disastrous effects on all aspects of cow performance, yield, milk quality and fertility. It is important, therefore, to manage cows to minimise the effect.

Dry cows.

Ensure plenty of long fibre is available to supplement late Autumn grass and, where possible, if needed start feeding concentrates earlier to increase energy intakes.

Lactating cows.

With many silages lacking in energy, cows in poor condition are going to struggle. Look to increase energy density. Use the highest-energy concentrates that are available, - those containing Megalac could be especially useful, as fat has such a high-energy content.

If TMR feeding is being used, then look at adding fat to the mix, - 0.5 kg of fat is equivalent to feeding approx 1.5kg of barley. Look to genuinely feed cows ad lib silage or mix.

If feed troughs are empty for only a few hours a day, then many cows are missing out on feed, making weight loss in early lactation more likely. Intake is driven by yield, so it is likely to be the fresh calvers that are being penalised if troughs are left empty.

Protein quality is also likely to be key this Winter. High-yielding cows need high-quality protein, and with soya values so high, the temptation will be to substitute for other sources. Check feed tickets to ensure ration quality, and if you are going to look at cheaper alternatives, then check the ration using a recognised feed rationing system, so that performance is not compromised.



Straight Talking

At the time of writing, the whole feed market is facing a massive downturn driven by a global downturn in the financial markets, with investors bailing out of the commodity market. This, combined with a massive surplus of cereals globally and very little demand for export due to poor exchange rates, has seen values slide. Moist feeds continue to struggle to find additional volumes as brewers report a major downturn in brewing volume, but with other energy values falling, it is difficult to justify this market's premiums.

The soya harvest in the States is 80% finished, with yield reports in line or below expectation. Will values fall further or harden? Will investors return to the commodity market? Time will tell! But our advice is still the same,- talk to the Trading Team to follow the market and book your requirements with us.

Trading Prices

Based 29t tipped Pembrokeshire

	Spot	Dec 08	Nov 07
Wheat	97	103	170
Hipro Soya	244	232	168
Rapemeal	129	132	122
Sugar Beet	176	176	150
Wheat Feed	119	120	103
Wheat Distillers	182	185	169

Ensure That What The Nutritionist Formulates Is What The Cow Eats.

In a recent study by CCF Ruminant Specialists, it was found that on many farms only around 15% of Mixed Rations are consumed as formulated. This was backed up by recent Reading University research which found up to a 1litre a cow difference between the same diet presented through different wagons and presentation. This difference was attributed to diet sorting and poor mixing.

Protocols

To overcome this and try to predict ration sorting, C.C.F has been using a unique computer system based around the use of Penn state particle separators (psps). These are a series of 3 sieves that, when a TMR ration is placed through, will separate the mix out into different particle sizes.

This programme is able to assess the following :-

1. The ideal particle size for a TMR diet.
2. Evaluate the quality of mixing achieved with actual farm mixer wagon results.
3. Identify diets and rations which could give problems with rumen function and intakes and help correct or reformulate more effective solutions.

It is currently our intention at C.C.F to use this system on more farms to help match actual diet formulation with the mixing achieved. It is apparent that with a wide cross-section of wagon makes and designs, this service will help to get the best out of your cows.

Contact Points

To discuss any of the articles present, please speak to any of the following or your local branch or representative:

Richard Lewis 07824 327550

Phil Evans 07825 624337

David Evans 07970 002188